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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN PLEDGES SUPPORT FOR DUSHANBE TIFA MEETING,
SUPPORTS DRAFT AGENDA IN PRINCIPLE

REF: (A) 03/08 Hafner email to Central Asian posts
(B) Astana 00128

¶1. (SBU) Damigul Kabiyeveva, Head of the Ministry of Industry and Trade's WTO Accession Department, told econoff on March 11 that while Kazakhstan has no preference as to the location of 2008 TIFA Council Meeting, the GOK welcomes Tajikistan's invitation to host the event in Dushanbe in early June, and is willing to assist in coordinating the gathering.

¶2. (SBU) Per ref A, econoff shared with Kabiyeveva our preliminary draft TIFA agenda. She said she supported the agenda in principle, noting that streamlining customs procedures and facilitating regional trade provide an appropriate focus for the meeting. Kabiyeveva did, however, express doubts as to the ability of participating TIFA member states to establish effective working groups prior to June.

¶3. (SBU) Kabiyeveva reiterated Kazakhstani concerns that after three years of participation in TIFA, there are few demonstrated results. Kazakhstan remains anxious to see TIFA and the Council Meetings "go from dialogue to practical measures" (see ref B). She said that TIFA would greatly benefit from having a governance structure, perhaps similar to that of Eurasian Economic Community, which could establish a schedule for future Council Meetings based on a rotating roster of hosts and agenda items. Kabiyeveva contended that this would facilitate the preparation done by experts and working groups in advance of future Council Meetings, thereby allowing for more results-oriented annual gatherings. Finally, Kabiyeveva repeated her Ministry's recommendation that representatives of international trade organizations be encouraged to attend as well, as they could offer relevant and valuable perspectives on the challenges to regional trade.

¶4. (U) Kabiyeveva and her deputy, Saadat Assanseiteva, remain the principal working level contacts in the GOK for TIFA issues.

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